

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

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R 291700Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 877

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 6319

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NATO, SP

SUBJECT: SPAIN AND NATO

REF: STATE 91998

1. IN ACCORDANCE WITH INSTRUCTIONS, CHARGE' MADE POINTS
CONTAINED REFTEL TO WALTER GARDINI, THE VICE DIRECTOR GENERAL,
MFA, ON APRIL 28. (GAJA WAS IN CAIRO WITH RUMOR AND DUCCI WAS
IN TURKEY, LEAVING GARDINI AS THE SENIOR OFFICER IN THE
MINISTRY).

2. GARDINI SAID THE IDEAS EXPRESSED BY THE CHARGE' HAD TO A
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GREAT EXTENT ALREADY BEEN CONVEYED THROUGH THE ITALIAN MISSION

IN BRUSSELS AND THROUGH AMBASSADOR ORTONA FROM WASHINGTON. MOREOVER, THE SPANISH FOREIGN MINISTER HAD RAISED THE ISSUE WITH THE GOI'S AMBASSADOR IN MADRID. CITING THE HISTORICAL TIE AMONG EUROPEAN SOCIALISTS, GARDINI SUGGESTED THAT ITALY WOULD BE AMONG THE LAST COUNTRIES IN NATO WHICH COULD BE EXPECTED TO TAKE POLITICAL STEPS TO FOSTER SPANISH MEMBERSHIP IN THE ALLIANCE. THE BEST ITALY COULD DO AT THIS STAGE WITH THE FRANCO REGIME STILL IN POWER WAS TO REMAIN SILENT AND LET "TECHNICAL" RELATIONS DEVELOP. THERE HAVE BEEN EXCHANGES OF MILITARY ACADEMY VISITS FOR EXAMPLE, VISITS BY MILITARY LEADERS, VISITS AT THE POLITICAL DIRECTOR LEVEL OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRIES. THE PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAVE INSTRUCTED THAT THESE RELATIONS EVOLVE PROGRESSIVELY AND IN A LOW KEY. SO THERE HAS BEEN SOME PROGRESS. BUT THE POLITICAL CONSULTATIONS AT THE LEVEL OF MFA DIRECTOR GENERAL DUCCI ARE PROBABLY ALREADY AT THE LIMIT OF PRESENT POLITICAL POSSIBILITIES.

3. GARDINI COMMENTED THAT PORTUGAL WAS AN EXAMPLE OF INADEQUATE ALLIED KNOWLEDGE OF THE SITUATION BEFORE THE OVERTHROW OF THE GAETANO REGIME. ITALY, FOR ONE, DID NOT HAVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH MEMBERS OF THE PORTUGUESE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT, OR WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF POLITICAL MOVEMENTS. IN THE CASE OF SPAIN, HOWEVER, THERE ARE LINKS BETWEEN THE RESPECTIVE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC AND SOCIALIST PARTIES AS WELL AS TO SOME EXTENT BETWEEN THE MILITARY LEADERSHIPS. IF THE GOAL IS EVOLUTION TOWARD CLOSER SPAIN/NATO TIES, GARDINI EXPECTS OVER THE LONG TERM THAT THESE RELATIONSHIPS WILL BE REINFORCED. IN THE SHORTER TERM, HOWEVER, ANY ATTEMPT BY THE GOI TO SUPPORT DRAMATICALLY CLOSER VISIBLE LINKS BETWEEN SPAIN AND THE ALLIANCE WOULD LEAD TO CLASHES BETWEEN ITALIAN POLITICAL FORCES, AND WOULD STRENGTHEN THOSE WHO ARE ANTI-NATO. WITH THE PASSING OF FRANCO THE ITALIAN POSITION COULD CHANGE QUICKLY AND GARDINI FELT IT WAS IMPORTANT NOW TO PREPARE THE WAY FOR THE NEW SITUATION THAT WOULD EMERGE. FOR EXAMPLE, THE EEC SHOULD BE READY IMMEDIATELY TO OFFER LINKS TO THE TRANSITIONAL SPANISH GOVERNMENT. WE SHOULD NOW BE BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH KEY FIGURES IN MADRID WHO WILL LIKELY PLAY A ROLE IN THE EVOLUTION OF THE SPANISH POLITICAL SYSTEM. BUT ONE COULD NOT REASONABLY EXPECT ITALY TO BE IN THE FOREFRONT DURING THIS PREPARATORY PERIOD.

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4. IN REPLY TO THE CHARGE'S QUESTION, GARDINI AGREED THAT THERE SHOULD BE A "LOW VISIBILITY WAY" OF SHOWING SUPPORT FOR A LESS THAN FORMAL SPANISH/NATO LINK. IF THE NATO SECRETARIAT COULD, FOR EXAMPLE, FIND A WAY TO DEMONSTRATE INTEREST IN SPAIN AND MADE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SPAIN'S CONTRIBUTION TO EUROPEAN SECURITY WITHOUT PROVOKING HOSTILE REACTIONS IN THE VARIOUS PARLIAMENTS, ITALY WOULD BE ABLE TO SUPPORT THE MOVE.

5. COMMENT: THOUGH GENERALLY NOT OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE EXTENT TO WHICH ITALY CAN PLAY A USEFUL ROLE IN THIS MATTER, GARDINI WILL FACTOR OUR VIEWS INTO CURRENT MFA POLICY CONSIDERATIONS. IN FACT, HOWEVER, THE ITALIANS ARE BEING AS ACTIVE AS CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES PERMIT IN DEVELOPING BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH SPAIN THAT ARE SUPPORTIVE OF OUR GENERAL GOAL. WHILE THE FRANCO REGIME REMAINS, WE CAN EXPECT HERE AS WELL AS ELSEWHERE IN THE ALLIANCE THAT CURRENT POLITICAL SENSITIVITIES WILL CLOUD THE VISION OF LEADERS IN THE SEARCH FOR WAYS TO FORGE CLOSER LINKS BETWEEN SPAIN AND THE ALLIANCE. WE BELIEVE THE GOI UNDERSTANDS THE PROBLEM, SYMPATHIZES WITH OUR INITIATIVES AND WOULD UNDER THE APPROPRIATE CIRCUMSTANCES SUPPORT THEM TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY WOULD NOT THREATEN THE STABILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT. WITH THE MFA SEIZED OF THE ISSUE, WE WILL, IN COMING WEEKS, STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF NATO/SPANISH LINKS IN OUR TALKS WITH THE ITALIAN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN THE HOPE OF PROVIDING A BROADER BASE FOR FUTURE ITALIAN SUPPORT. IN THE MEANTIME, N
WE BELIEVE IT MIGHT BE USEFUL IF SPANISH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC AND SOCIALIST LEADERS COULD BE ENCOURAGED TO INDICATE TO THEIR ITALIAN COUNTERPARTS THE IMPORTANCE OF NATO LINKS IN THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD OF SPANISH POLITICS. BEAUDRY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, MEMBERSHIP, ALLIANCE, POLITICAL SITUATION, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975ROME06319
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750150-1188
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975047/aaaaagha.tel
Line Count: 138
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 75 STATE 91998
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17 APR 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <23 SEP 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SPAIN AND NATO
TAGS: PFOR, SP, NATO, (GARDINI, WALTER)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006